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DOMESTIC SCENE TWELVE MONTHS AFTER MARRIAGE.

MARRIAGE ;

OR,

THE BACHELOR IN SEARCH OF A WIFE.

CHAPTER XIII.—TWO WIVES.

" Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign ; one who cares for thee
And for thy maintenance ; commits his body
To painful labour both by sea and land,
While thou liest warm at home, secure and safe."

No. 205, 1855.

It is a bad sign when a wife has a poor fire to greet her husband on his return from the labour of the day. It is an indication—a trifling one, indeed, but still an indication—of a serious state of carelessness and forgetfulness. It is pleasant to feel that when out of sight we are still in mind ; and the cheery blaze of the evening fire has a glad

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welcome, as many a husband in hall and cottage will tell you, which even kind words cannot replace. Ada did not like trouble, and she would very often sit until the fire was almost extinct, rather than exert herself to handle the poker or to stretch out her arm to the bell. The letters she had received had put every thing and every one not immediately concerned in them out of her mind; and when Henry Wentworth came in, wet and chilly after his long walk, there was nothing to be seen in the grate but dusty charred coals, a poker stuck most unscientifically between the bars, and a hearth entirely hidden by cinders and dust.

Ada looked up from her crossed epistle, but was too busy to return the kiss, which, as yet, had not been discontinued after short absences from home. Henry Wentworth was in excellent temper, and he rang the bell very gently, only commenting slightly on the coldness of the weather, and expressing the natural wish that the fire had not been out.

The maid came: she was an experimental maid out of the village, whom, in Ada's first zeal, she had taken into her service because the family was needy, but who proved, like most such experiments under the hands of inexperienced and half-hearted mistresses, an entire failure. She was untaught and unteachable—at least by Ada—and her time was nearly expired. She came now with a dustpan of hot cinders, robbed from the kitchen fire, and a bundle of wood, in order to repair the mischief; but all in vain, for the fire would not light.

It was provoking to see Ada, driven to the window from the increasing darkness of the afternoon, still reading those home letters, apparently as unconcerned at the fate of the fire as though no one's hands were cold but those of the clumsy Peggy, who, with bellows and poker together, made such a noise, that at length even Ada was aroused from her apathy, and called out, "Send Martha."

Being Saturday evening, Martha was baking, and not well pleased, by any means, at the summons. But for the master her step was ever lighter than for the mistress, and she soon brought about a state of warmth and comfort to the cheerless apartment.

Tea followed, and Ada, warmed with the tea, began to talk.

"How late you are this afternoon; and now you will be behind-hand with your sermon, and not in bed till morning, I know. I do wish, Henry, you would manage to be earlier on Saturdays."

"This was extra work, Ada; it was not choice, I assure you. Poor Jessie Dale is dead, and I could not leave her family in their sorrow. She died whilst I was there."

"Jessie Dale? the girl who has been in a decline so long?"

"Yes; I drove you over to see her, you may remember, a fortnight after our return."

Ada blushed. "I have never been to see her since: did they ask why?"

"Mrs. Dale said you had promised to call, but supposed the distance hindered you. I could not, you know, say much to that, as you had been several times to see the Priestleys, who live so near."

"I am afraid, Harry, it is not in my way to go

and see sick people. I can never talk to them, you know; and it is disagreeable to sit dumb and say nothing."

"You forget, dear, that sometimes we may learn as well as teach by the sick-bed. I know I have found it so: Jessie Dale has been quite a preacher to me."

"To you?"

"Yes, Ada, by her patient endurance, her child-like trust, her simple faith. I wish you could have been there. But it is not always necessary to preach to the sick in order to insure a welcome. Don't you think sick people like sympathy and love? I believe sometimes the mere pressure of the hand is as a message of consolation;—but, Ada, I am not talking to listening ears. What have you in that budget, so absorbing?"

"Oh, only letters from home."

"May I hear any of them?"

"I don't think they would interest you. My sisters are staying with grandpapa in London; and here is a very earnest request that you would let me go and keep Christmas there with them. They will all be in town, and mamma says she shall be miserable if I do not join them."

"Do you know what that involves, Ada?"

"No; what?"

"It may seem rather a selfish speech; but in case of your keeping Christmas in London, I must keep it in solitude here."

Ada blushed: "Why can you not go?"

"Because I have no one to take my duty; and even if I had, I should not choose to leave my flock at such a season, unless duty called me in another direction. Besides, I am going to be very busy; I have promised quite a series of festivities to my people, young and old. Mr. Hambrough is going to give all the old people a dinner on Christmas day, and I am to be there, of course, to keep order, and to try and make it something better than a mere frolic. Then the school children are to have tea and a treat on New Year's eve. And I should not like to be absent then; neither should I like to see my wife's place vacant."

Ada's pretty face clouded. How tame these rejoicings seemed, compared with those which she knew would be going forward in Grosvenor-street! They had no charms for her, and she sighed heavily.

"What must I write to papa and mamma, then? Must I say you will not spare me? They will think it so strange!"

He looked sorrowfully on her, and replied: "If you feel comfortable to go, Ada, I will not deny you; but you must go alone."

"And will it vex you for me to go? It seems such a duty to papa and mamma; I know they will feel it so to have me absent; but, Henry, you do look vexed; it is very unkind. If you do not spare me willingly, I would rather not go at all."

"My dear Ada, if you do not stay willingly, if you cannot feel the claim of home and husband, I would rather not detain you. There must be something more than external attraction in this case, to keep you in a quiet country village, away from your childhood's friends, when they are all gathering around the gladsome hearth, and young merry hearts are beating with hope and joy; there

must be something, I say, beyond all this, or you cannot stay happily."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that if your husband cannot supply the place of all these, it were better that you should go; if your duty as his wife is not binding, then again I say 'go.'"

She looked earnestly at him; his face wore an expression of disappointment and grief; and she burst into tears. "It is very natural, I'm sure; all girls would feel the same. You blame me, and speak as if I didn't love you; but you must think it is dull sometimes—so different from you. You can go out and forget it all; but here I sit hour after hour whilst you are out among the poor, or shut up in your study, and you never seem to feel for me, or to think that I have any cause of complaint."

Her husband gave another look of sad tenderness, and, kissing her kindly, said: "I cannot alter your lot, Ada. You were not forced into becoming the wife of a clergyman, nor did I choose my present position. I believe God placed me here; and I have but one cause of regret in that position, which is, that the wife I love cannot be happy to share it."

He left her alone, weeping passionately, and went to his solitary meditations. How would it have cheered him, weary and worn as he was with the work of the past week, and the prospect of the morrow's labours, to have felt that the young heart below-stairs, now throbbing with all the vexation and disappointment of a spoiled and wilful woman, was lifting up that heart in prayer for him amidst his solemn and sometimes onerous duties; that she loved his work for the work's sake; and that, with all his successes, and all his trials, she sympathised in the full fervour of her loving nature. Heavily moved the pen, and wearily sped the hours. He was disturbed, grieved, disappointed. What if the wife of his bosom proved a hindrance on his path of usefulness? what if he must journey to heaven alone? He reviewed the past, and bitter were his self-upbraids. He had never had any evidence that Ada was bent upon that journey. He had trusted to her love to him, and had forgotten the important question of her love to his Master.

It was a mournful Saturday evening. Far into the night he sate writing with a saddened heart, and when the duty was over, and his aching head demanded repose, he still sate by the smouldering fire of his little study, thinking of Ada. There was no anger in his thoughts—nothing but love, tender, pitying love. He blamed himself, not her; and, kneeling down, he did all that remained for him to do—he prayed for her, and prayed for himself; for patience, for wisdom, and for consistency, that so she might be won; and, taking his candle, a little comforted but still very mournful, he went to his chamber.

There, with the tear yet moist upon her beautiful cheek, lay his sleeping wife, the night lamp burning beside her, and a book of light reading, the too frequent companion of her solitude, on the coverlid, her slender finger still between the leaves. And this on Saturday evening! But he loved her still; and, kissing the small mouth, and shading the lamp from her closed eyes, he sighed one more

wearied sigh, and then lay down to think, though not to sleep.

No allusion was made to the Christmas visit on the following day. Ada seemed convicted of unkindness, and earnestly strove to dispel the clouds which rested on her husband's heart. She was not naturally cold or selfish; she was sincerely attached to Henry Wentworth, and grateful to him, as well she might be, for his forbearing love. She was conscious, however, of an unftness, of a want of congeniality; and this consciousness cast a reserve over her manner, and a want of openness on subjects even of common interest. And as she rested on his arm on their way to church, the pleasant village bells chiming sweetly, even through the misty air of a November morning, and saw couples going lovingly on their way thither, she wondered if there were any two in the little flock of worshippers between whom such a distance existed as between herself and Henry.

An aged man in deep mourning met them at the church gate. It was good old farmer Ray, who had only in the previous week buried his faithful helpmeet of thirty long years. It was still early, and the young curate stopped to address a word or two of consolation to the mourning widower.

"It is a sorrowful Sunday for me," said the old man; "for thirty years we have knelt together in God's house; we have gone along the same road to the same home, and she has gained it first. Thank God, she is safe; and thank God, too, sir, that it is but for a little while. We have been fellow travellers to heaven; we have had our sorrows, God knows, but nothing which ever divided our love. We were of one heart and one mind: and if now and then we couldn't see eye to eye in little matters, what signified it? we always met on the great point. Ah, and we shall meet again, please God, afore long, where that *one thing* will be all in all."

Poor Ada! she pressed the old man's hand, and there was a rising sob, which smote on her husband's ear, as, leaving her at the door of her pew, he went slowly and solemnly to prepare for the service of the day.

Christmas came. Ada did not go to London; but neither did she enter with spirit or energy into the little festivities of her village home; and whilst she stood among the happy school children on New Year's eve, her husband's eye, as it rested on her, filled with tears. She had meekly resigned her will to his; but, alas! outward conformity may exist without internal union on the most momentous of all questions.

It was a fortnight after the new year, when through the little village street, late in the afternoon, drove a neat travelling carriage, and, stopping at the Green Man, the principal inn of the place, out stepped a quiet-looking couple—the gentleman might be thirty years of age, the lady younger—who, after ordering beds, inquired for the residence of Mr. Wentworth, the curate.

The landlord, after directing them to their pretty house, about a quarter of a mile off, went back in a bustle to enjoin the airing of the best bed, and the strangers pursued their way to the Wentworths. There was a glad acclamation from

Ada, who was seated at the window in one of her sunniest moods, a rush into the little garden, and a fervent embrace of the lady. It was no other than an old schoolfellow, between whom and herself a very sincere affection had existed, and who, although some years older than Ada, had retained a very vivid recollection of their school fellowship.

Correspondence, as is often the case, even between the close friends of early life, had languished; and although Ada had received intelligence of Catharine Farre's marriage, and she, on her part, had received Ada's wedding cards, the intercourse had stopped there, and it was not without some surprise that Ada saw her friend, now matronly and grave in demeanour, open the little garden gate. They were returning from a visit to Mr. Harcourt's family at Buxton, and having heard through a friend of Henry Wentworth's settlement at L——, they could not resist—Catharine, at least, could not—a peep at the young couple in their country nook. Catharine was little altered; she was warm and genial as ever; her husband, who was not exactly the man whom Ada would have pictured for her friend, was a fine, manly fellow, with little of the hero about him, however.

Beds at the hotel were not to be thought of, Ada said; and Henry must go and countermand the order forthwith. How much the old schoolfellows had to talk about; and Henry and Frank Harcourt would get on admirably together—no fear of it!

After supper was over, and Catharine and Ada had taken leave of their husbands, it was the most natural thing in the world that the two wives should sit in confidential converse in the visitors' chamber; and there, with their feet on the fender, and the fire stirred up into a cheerful blaze, they told one another the little histories of their courtship and marriage, of which each was ignorant.

"I am an old married woman to you, Ada; I have been married three years," said Catharine, "and a happy three years it has been, but"—and she looked down on her mourning dress—"but for the death of the first-born: yet, oh! I should never have known the depths of my husband's love, I think," she continued, after a little tearful pause, "but for this sorrow. It made us so thoroughly feel our oneness. Dear little Willie! it was a short bright life. I am thankful for it, though it closed all too soon."

"But tell me, Catharine, from the beginning, for you have told me nothing yet, where and how you met your husband. We used to laugh at you in our school-days about some cousin."

She blushed, her long hair falling over her face, as she replied: "Ah, yes, that could never have been. It was a boy and girl love, and it would have been impossible. He did not love what I loved, you know, and therefore such a union could not be. It was a hard struggle, but one which I have never repented. I went home from school rather later in life, and I had not been long there when Charles Harcourt found me out, and married me. I have such a happy home in a pleasant old-fashioned farm-house in Wiltshire, for Charles is a sort of farmer. He is not quite what you would have expected in my husband, is he?"

"Not quite; we used to think you rather romantic at school."

The happy wife laughed—a merry, heart-glad laugh, though the tears for her little one were scarcely dry.

"He is not, indeed, such as a school-girl would picture; but, oh, Ada, he is so excellent. I might have made a grander match. Papa and mamma, I believe, thought mine a very poor one, but we have enough, and more than enough, of this world's goods. And then there are the riches of his true, honest heart, his fervent piety, his conscientious walk;" and the eyes filled again. "You know, Ada, that although I hope I can say truly that I love all that Charles loves, I needed a help on my way. I am very weak—wanting, perhaps, decision of character and firmness of principle. He is a true strength, a very staff on the journey. I have not a thought nor a weakness but he knows; and although, perhaps, our tastes are not exactly similar in many lesser things, still it is such a comfort that the great object and purpose of life is the same with each. Ah! what is any union worth which terminates here?"

She gazed into the fire, her heart full of her own thoughts of love and gratitude. Ada gazed too.

"What, indeed!" thought she.

"And you, dear Ada, how thankful I was to hear you had become the wife of a good man, a clergyman too. It is not exactly what I should have pictured for you, either. You used to talk of great things in the matrimonial line—do you not remember? Nothing less than a member of parliament, and a town house and country house, a box at the opera and the theatre, and so forth. Dear Ada, how wild you used to be about theatricals. What a blessing that you have found such a haven and such a guardian!"

The torrent of tears which broke forth almost startled Mrs. Harcourt with its vehemence.

"The heart is the same, Catharine," she said at last. "The desires, the tastes, are unchanged. May God forgive me! I have brought sorrow on the spirit of one of the best of men. None can tell better than I, his unworthy wife, how unequally he is yoked. And he loves me so, and, in the midst of all, is so patient, so gentle, though so mournful. But I cannot love what he loves, Catharine; I cannot forget old habits and old tastes, which have been from childhood until now part of my being. I am not happy. I love him; who could do otherwise? but it is with a kind of trembling love, as one not worthy—a distant love, as though between him and me a great chasm yawned. I thought, when few doubts used to cross my mind before we married—I thought that perhaps away from all temptations, and under his care, and with his love, I must become like-minded with him. But I find less inclination towards his tastes and views now, than in the days of our early love and married life; and in this dull place I long more than ever for the amusements which my sisters are enjoying. I find very truly that circumstances and places do not change characters. Yet it is not for me to complain. I deserve to suffer; but he—"

Her old friend's arm was around her neck, and she drew the young wife closer to her bosom, with a half matronly, half sisterly pressure, as she said:—

"We have often talked of these things, Ada, in old times, and I remember, when you were a giddy girl, you would still listen to me sometimes, though you laughed at me often. Listen to me now. Because you are not all your husband, as a christian man, desires for a companion and helpmate, is that any reason you should remain so?"

Poor Ada dried her tears hastily; on hearing her husband's foot on the stairs, she retreated through an opposite door which led into her dressing-room, and met him with a face on which pride and sorrow were struggling for the mastery. He bade her tenderly go to rest, feared she was tired and excited, and gently chid her for sitting up so late.

"Have you been telling Mr. Harcourt of my deficiencies, Henry?" she asked, trying to smile; but the smile died away and tears came instead.

"My dear wife, what a question! Your deficiencies! and you know I feel there is but one in you, and that I tell only to Him who can and will, I believe, fill the blank."

"Has he been telling you what a good wife he has, then?"

"We have not been talking of our wives at all. Mr. Harcourt has been consulting me on other matters. He has lately lost a considerable sum of money through his elder brother's dishonesty, and he finds it necessary to retrench. It was only by to-day's post that he has learned the full extent of their loss, and the necessity which there will be to part with their pretty house in Wiltshire, to give up the gentleman farmer, and to become a hard-working practical man. He knows that I have an uncle settled in Canada, doing well there, and he wished to consult me about going out."

"Poor Catharine! what will she do? Canada! she, with her strong home affections, to be banished there! She will scarcely live to hear it."

"He will not, I am sure, act contrary to her judgment; but I must not let you talk any longer. Go to bed, dear Ada, and to sleep. There has been more than excitement enough for this day, and your hand is hot and your pulse quick."

It was morning again—a clear frosty January morning. The husband of Catharine Harcourt had a heavy task before him, but one from which he did not shrink. After breakfast was over, and Mr. Wentworth was gone forth on his day's work among the sick, of which at this inclement season there were many, especially among the aged poor, he and Catharine set forth on a walk to view one of the many beautiful scenes in the neighbourhood, which even in their winter dress were not without their charms. It was a bad opening; but Catharine pressing his hand, said, as they wound along a rocky path:

"Dear Charles, this is all very lovely; but do you know I like our pretty pasture land at Burnham, and our snug homestead, with its orchard and its croft, and the dear old house with its crooked chimneys and many gables, better than anything I have seen here; for it is home, and *our* home."

"Do you think you could bear to leave our home, Catharine?"

"It would be a trial, certainly," she replied, still not dreaming of the possibility. "It was our first home, you know, and Willie's birth-place. No

house could be like Burnham Farm to me. Dear Willie! that green terrace walk, with its high box edging, where he first ran alone; and the old yew tree cock, at which he used to clap his baby hands; and then the little grave, which I can see from my bed-room window, where my baby sleeps. Oh no! Charles, I could not bear, I think, to leave Burnham."

He looked mournfully at her, great strong man as he was, with perhaps a touch of roughness about him; he was softened even to tears, and he took her hand tenderly as a courtier, and heartily too as a loving husband, and said:

"But, Catharine, it may be that we *must* leave Burnham. I told you on Monday I had met with a severe loss—I fear you scarcely comprehend how severe; I did not myself. I am a ruined man, my Kate, and I must sell Burnham if I would be an honest one."

She did not reply for a moment. Catharine Harcourt was human, and she had her share—more than her share, perhaps—of value for the comforts if not luxuries of life, and all a tender delicate woman's love for the fond associations of a happy home. A few quiet tears there were, and a sad silence. At length she said:

"Shame upon me, Charles; shame upon any regret whilst *you* are left me. What is Burnham with all its memories, even my baby's birth-place, compared with the treasure of your love. All places will be home with you, dear husband, and all homes will be happy under our Father's smile and blessing. We will seek another home together, then. Your heart is my true home, after all, Charles, and I want no better."

"It is worth while to be driven from Burnham, Kate," was his grateful reply, "to hear those words; but can you leave England, your mother, the many who love you? Are you prepared for this?"

"God helping me I can, dear Charles, not to-day, perhaps; but I am not called to leave England to-day, and as the day, remember, so the strength will be."

When she returned to her friend, Ada saw the traces of tears, and almost dreaded to hear the story from her lips; but Catharine at once and openly began:

"After all, Ada, it is not so very hard to toil up the hill of life with these supports;" and she laid her small hand on her husband's shoulder, who was seated by the window, looking sadly on the wintry prospect without, and yet more sadly on the blight which had come over his manhood.

"Many a solitary old maid, Charles, would be forced to go to Canada with such a man as you."

"And don't you think, perhaps some poor bachelor, roaming about the world, trying single life at the diggings, or struggling through his thorny path in the bush, would be glad even of you, poor Kate, to mend his stockings, and to boil the water for his tea? Two are better than one, dearest, whether in joy or in sorrow."

There were many more aching hearts than those of the two emigrants that day in the old country, and Henry Wentworth and his beautiful wife, as they saw the loving christian couple leave their garden gate, had each a secret bitterness with which no stranger might intermeddle.

RUSSIA AS I SAW IT FORTY YEARS AGO.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

FORTY years ago, in the best days of the reign of Alexander, the soldiers of Russia were something like civilised men, and not ignorant barbarians or slaves, as by far the greater part are now. In the days of Suwarrow, Kutusoff, and Bening-sen, they did what, in the language of ruthless war, may be called noble deeds. They were a brave, hardy, and comparatively patriotic race, fighting, as they believed, for their country and for the peace of Europe. They had also a country to fight for, which they thought they could call their own, and which they could return to when the war was over, and enjoy their life peacefully on the lands to be allotted to them as a reward for their services in the bloody field. Alexander always held out this prospect to them—whether sincerely or otherwise I know not. He was greatly under the influence of his wise and excellent mother, the ex-empress, by which the Tartar part of his character was subdued, and rendered somewhat more compatible with the rules of civilisation. In his dealings with the first Napoleon, indeed, we have abundant evidence of the grossest ambition and meanest duplicity; so much so, that the French emperor, who was a keen judge of human character, denominated Alexander "a Greek of the Lower Empire"—a term equivalent to his belonging to the lowest grade of civilised men. Yet there was much in Alexander's conduct that was entitled to respect, and even admiration, in reference to the improvement of his soldiers. He assisted his mother in establishing schools for their children, and hospitals for their sick and infirm; he appropriated lands for their endowment, and limited their term of service, at the end of which they were to retire with honour to their military colonies, as they were to be called.

Thus the Russian soldier of 1810 to 1815 had a country and a home to fight for, or to defend; but the present army of Russia have neither: the same prospects may be held out to them, for anything I can tell; but the soldiers well know that, when transferred to the ranks, they bid adieu to home and friends for ever. They have no country, therefore, but the ground on which they are marshalled, no home but the tents in which they may for the time reside, whether in Poland, the Caucasus, Bessarabia, or the Crimea. When they once leave their kindred, not one in a hundred ever returns. In lieu of all recollections, endearing to humanity under every condition, they have an ambitious worm of the earth, called their czar, thrust down their throats. Him they are taught to believe to be their father, their god, their country, and their home. They have to know no will but his. He is the head of all common law, of all revealed religion; while their false priests continually preach to them, that if they are slain in battle for their czar, they are immediately translated, like Elijah, to heaven. Relying on this delusive and destructive hope, the Russian armies of the present day will endure every privation incident to a lengthened and bloody campaign; they will brave fire, flood, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and nakedness, without a murmur. No wonder, then, that

they are careless of life when they meet their enemies in battle, and do deeds of daring, apparently seeking death or victory. This has often been mistaken for manly courage; but it has no claim to such a feeling: it is but the result of the education allowed them by their autocrat, and by which he has moulded them to his will.

The warriors of Suwarrow and Kutusoff were often men of thought, and even of intelligence. Many of them could read and write; for before Nicholas came to the throne, one of the fundamental laws of the Greek church was in full operation, namely, that every parish throughout the empire should have a public school. A smattering of knowledge was thus generally obtained, and the army of 1810 had profited by it. I have often looked in on these warriors in their watch-houses or bivouacs, and conversed with them in some tongue mutually understood, and have found them humane and peacefully disposed men. These were the soldiers of Eylau, and Friedland, and Borodino; and nobly did they stand up at each of these dreadful battles, dividing the victory with the legions of Napoleon in the first and last-named conflicts.

But what are the present soldiers of Russia? A mass of ignorant slaves, without mind, without motive, save the glory of their idol, and formidable only from the weight of their bodies, or from their almost unlimited numbers, when their despot has sufficient resources to furnish them with muskets, artillery, and ammunition. He sports with their lives as a gamester does with his counters; and, when they are used up, no report chronicles their names, nor can their mothers or wives or children (if they have any) ever know whether they are living, or find out where they fell. We have abundant proof of the deterioration of the soldiers of Russia as compared with those of Alexander's days, in their defeats at Oltenitza and Citate by a smaller number of Turks, as well as in the later campaigns of the Crimea, whenever they met their opponents in the open field.

What is transpiring before the public, however, will have enabled them to form their own conclusions respecting the character of the czar's troops. A few remarks on some of the members of the royal dynasty of Russia will conclude my notes.

Alexander, the reigning emperor at the time of my visit, was the beloved son of Paul and the empress Sophia. He was very desirous of cultivating the arts of peace, and gave great encouragement to British manufacturers, but especially farmers and nurserymen, to settle in his dominions. Wishing to have his country fully occupied, and to have a race of people wholly given to peaceful pursuits, he desired to turn Russia into a well-cultivated land, covered over with farms and gentlemen's seats. Perhaps an opinion he had several times expressed, when I was in his capital, may not be generally known: "If I were to be any other than emperor of Russia," he said, "I would be an English country gentleman." I had an offer to accompany an English official at the court of Russia, to sup in the presence of Alexander at his palace of Peterhoff. There the emperor used occasionally to abandon etiquette, and enjoy a familiar chat with foreign visitors. I deeply regretted that I could not avail myself of this invitation; but, besides a sad deficiency of courage to enter

the presence of so great a mortal, I had not the means then to put myself in a proper condition to do so.

I can give a rather more decided opinion as to the religious impressions of Alexander than was stated in a former article upon him in this journal. It is founded not merely on his personal encouragement of our missionaries in Siberia, although, through deference to his hierarchy, he could take no public measures to show it, and his desire to have the bible circulated through his dominions, but also on the contents of a private letter written by him, and which I saw when on a visit at Kiel, to the pious and enlightened pastor H——, a professor of the university in that city. This communication contained an invitation to that worthy minister, who had been for some years known as an author, as well as an effective preacher of the gospel, to come and be the supreme superintendent of the Lutheran churches of the Russian empire. The emperor offered him an ample income and many immunities. He at the same time professed his admiration of the professor's writings, and his full concurrence in the evangelical doctrines he so boldly held forth. The whole letter was written in the spirit of a truly religious man. The worthy professor, however, declined the honour. It was not out of any doubt of the emperor's sincerity that he did so, though some doubts were extensively entertained, but from his idea of his own incompetence to fill so exalted a station, and his fear lest it should lessen his own religious happiness. When a small periodical was afterwards started in Germany, comprehending the purest doctrines of the reformation, the emperor, through prince Galitzin, gave orders that it should be admitted post-free within his empire.

Paul's second son, Constantine, was a Tartar, inheriting all the rude vices of his race, only showing occasional sparks of humanity and benevolence. Sometimes he was open, generous, and free; at other times morose, fierce, and cruel. He was assuredly unfitted to reign even over a guard-room of soldiers; but whether the eccentricity of his father descended only upon him, is much to be questioned. Of the youngest son, Michael, I knew but little, except that he was swallowed up with the most preposterous vanity, and cared for little but for his ease and self-indulgence.

With respect to the late emperor, Nicholas, he is now before me, as I saw him in his youth, walking arm-in-arm with his brother Constantine on the parade at Cronstadt. Constantine, or the party pointed out as him, (for the great dissimilarity in the appearance of the two individuals inspired doubts as to their being brothers) had a gay and careless air, a swarthy complexion, a slightly pugged nose, a strange sort of dress, and a cocked hat, such as we see in the portraits of Frederick the Great. Nicholas, on the contrary, was dressed in the costume of an English gentleman, with simply a school-boy's cap on his head. Both youths were of the same height, though Constantine was two years the senior. The appearance of Nicholas was singularly captivating. His features were very regular, and he was decidedly handsome, though rather pale. The face was like one cut out of marble by a Grecian sculptor, and it appeared almost as cold. There was not a trace

of human passion or feeling on it. Unlike youths of his age, he seemed to me to have schooled himself so completely, that no one looking on him could tell his internal emotions. His eye was, however, a remarkable one, and seemed to look on every side, and search into everything. When its glance fell direct upon me, as he passed, I almost started; and indeed to this day I have not forgotten the sensation I then felt. Without exaggeration, it seemed as if some lurid fire was kindled, and shut up in that breast, and that the eye was the only channel through which its flame could be seen. Mournful, I have often since thought, was it, that within a youthful form so noble and so commanding, should have grown up a spirit so scarred and defaced by unholy ambition. Alas! to please him whom I thus saw in the opening days of life, innocent, and capable, by a right direction of his talents, of becoming the benefactor of the world, millions and millions of men were torn from their families and homes, and, after being drilled and cudgelled into walking automata, had to experience all the horrors of war, and die without a friend to cheer or console them. His reign may be briefly summed up as one long conspiracy against the peace of the world.

Instead of being the father of his people, as he was called, he was the destroyer of their body, mind, and spirit. He discouraged schools shortly after he ascended the throne, banished all missionaries from his dominions, and practically, at least, wrote the rescript, ascribed to him in a late work, by a foreign nobleman: "Let there be no mind in my dominions. I, Nicholas, the czar, so will it."

For more than twenty years was Nicholas establishing fortresses, casting cannon, founding manufactories of fire-arms, building mighty ships, entrenching all imaginable strongholds, and training a million of men as soldiers, while the whole of the rest of Europe was making progress in civilisation and knowledge, and, with the exception of some convulsions, reposing in profound peace. In our day we have seen the explosion of this mine, charged with materials for the destruction of European civilisation. We have marked, too, the recoil of the detested engine of war upon the hand that first called it into action. Who shall imagine the feelings of mortified ambition and pride that would have filled the mind of Nicholas, had he lived to see the destruction of Sebastopol, and the submergence in the waters of the Euxine of that navy for which he had plotted and schemed and sinned! In an evil hour, as has been well observed, he crossed the Pruth to destroy an empire; but what empire that was, whether the Turkish or his own, remains to be seen.

ANOTHER WORD ON THE MICROSCOPE.

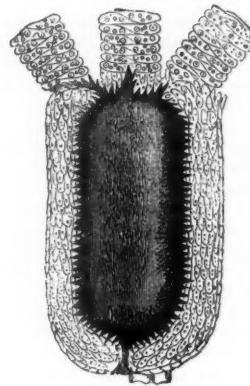
THE possessor of a good compound microscope, with achromatic object glasses, has at his command the key of a realm of which the rest of the world knows little except by report, and which is a million times more populous than the whole visible surface of the globe. More than any other student of nature, he possesses the power of varying his studies with the certainty of interesting

results. The geographer finds the map of the world, to the minutest creek of the remotest shore, laid down with unquestionable precision; the astronomer finds that the heavens have been as accurately surveyed; the microscopist, on the other hand, plunges into the invisible, and there encounters a universe, which, while it reveals new marvels at every fresh glance, bids defiance to the powers and perseverance that seek to exhaust its material wonders. By the invisible we must be understood to mean not only what is not perceptible by the naked eye, but such surfaces of objects more or less familiar, as present one aspect to the unassisted vision, and another to the microscopic view. Whether he examine the structures of the vegetable or mineral kingdoms, or dive among the countless myriads of animated forms which make the world of water a world of life, he meets everywhere with overpowering evidences of omnipotent wisdom and providential tenderness and care. Together with the traces of divine and wondrous skill, he will be startled with the pervading presence of a system of economy as wondrous and divine—a system too complex, it is true, for complete comprehension by his finite capacity, but too obvious in its operation, and too simple in some of its details, not to be suggestive of its comprehensive grandeur and perfection.

We propose in the present paper, which must be very brief, to take a hasty glance at some of the minute orders of life which have been supposed to form a kind of connecting link between the animal and vegetable kingdoms. They certainly seem to have some claim to be considered in either light; but, looking to their appetites, propensities, and evident sentient capacities, the classification that consigns them unreservedly to the category of animals must be accepted as the true one. We will commence with a glance at one which the young microscopic observer will have no difficulty in procuring, should he wish to verify the truth of our remarks.

The hydra, or common fresh-water polyp, is the simplest form of the zoophytes: it is furnished

What is especially curious about these creatures is the mode of their reproduction, which is two-fold.

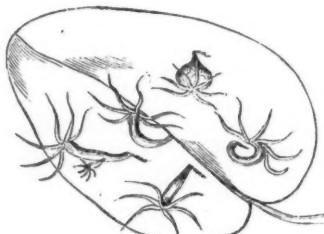


SECTION OF THE BROWN HYDRA.

In summer, and when well supplied with food, they multiply by gemmation, or budding, in the following way. At first a little pimple or projection is visible on the surface of the stomach; this, as it enlarges, is discerned to be hollow, and communicating with the cavity of the stomach, receiving a portion of the food that enters it. As the projection or bud increases in size, the most prominent portion of it thins away and splits into an aperture, which soon takes the form and the function too, of a mouth; around the mouth minute hairy filaments sprout forth, which grow rapidly, and are formed into tentacula, or fingers, ready to snatch at anything eatable that comes by.

By these means the bud or young polyp becomes gradually capable of providing for his own support, and as his capacity in this respect increases, the communication between his own stomach and that of his parent is observed to become narrower, until it finally closes up, and the supplies in that direction are cut off. What was first the channel of vital communication now dwindles into a mere band or stalk, which grows thinner every hour. At last when the polyp no longer needs to be tied to its mother's apron, a mutual separation is agreed upon, and is thus effected:—The parent attaches itself by each extremity to some firm substance; the youngster does the same to some other extraneous body; the old one suddenly contracts itself by a violent effort, and the maternal bond is severed. The other mode of reproduction is by eggs, from which the young polyps are hatched; but this rarely takes place except in the winter, and appears to be a provision of nature to secure the perpetuation of the species during that rigorous season.

Let us look at some of the animalculæ to be found in a drop of water. Of these creatures, which differ in size from the 30th to the 30,000th part of an inch, one of the most remarkable is the navicula. Upon examination it appears to be cased in an armour of flint, but it contrives to walk about upon twenty or thirty legs. If we watch it narrowly for five or six hours—no inconsiderable period in the existence of an animalcule—

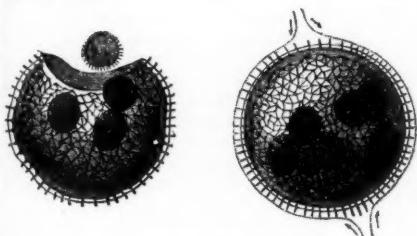


THE GREEN HYDRA.

with a regular stomach—a long bag with a foot or sucker at the base; the mouth is at the other extremity, and is surrounded by tentacula. Two species, the green and the brown, are common in this country; the tentacula of the former are shorter than its body, while those of the brown are sometimes three or four times the body's length. A membranous wall surrounds the stomach; and so simple is the organisation of the animal, that it may be turned inside out without injury.

we shall note a thin transparent line spreading across it in some direction or other. After the line makes its first appearance, it becomes more visible every minute, and rapidly increases in width. At length the creature begins wriggling its limbs violently, the body splits asunder, and two new naviculae are made out of one old one. This curious creature has something like a hundred stomachs, and its mouth, which is situated near one extremity, is surrounded by a number of almost invisible tentacula, with which it grasps its food; but as soon as the transparent line appears, which denotes its approaching division into two, as another mouth will be wanted, another is seen sprouting from the other extremity, and is ready to perform its functions as soon as the separation is effected.

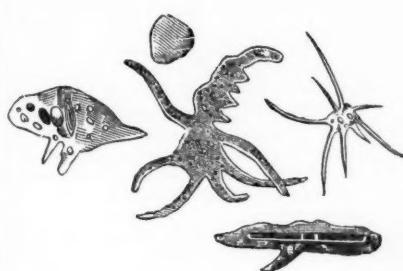
The navicula comes to maturity at the age of twelve hours, and under ordinarily favourable circumstances divides itself into two every twelve hours. It is therefore reproduced upon Mr. Malthus's principle, that is, according to a geometrical ratio; and at the end of a month, such is the result of geometrical progression, that were there no checks to their increase, a single navicula would have produced over eight hundred millions of living beings. But it would seem that even such a rate of increase is not sufficient for the demand; because some kinds of the naviculae split themselves into sixteen instead of two in the same space of time. This prodigious rate of reproduction is a bountiful natural provision to supply the wants of innumerable multitudes of creatures of a larger growth, of whom the minute classes of animalcules are the food.



THE VOLVOX GLOBATA.

A still more remarkable inhabitant of the water-drop is the volvox globata, so called because it resembles a globe, and is seen revolving on its own axis. Though you may see several of these in a single drop of water, you will note that they never interfere with each other, or even come into contact, thus proving that though rolling over and over, they have the entire control of their own motions. On observing the volvox attentively, we find it covered with green spots which are connected together by a net-work of lines perfectly visible under the microscope. We shall see, also, breaking loose from the film which forms the body of the animalcule, other small globes. At first they resemble the green spots, being of the same size, or smaller; but gradually they grow larger, and are seen floating about in the interior of the parent volvox, and like it each one revolves upon its own axis, regulating its motion with the greatest precision. At length the parent animalcule, grown thin as an air bubble, bursts, and the young escape

into the surrounding world of the water-drop. But even before this takes place, we can see revolving in the interiors of this second generation, a third generation equally well formed and well prepared to emerge into independent life. If we add additional power to the microscope, we shall see that even the smallest of these minute revolving creatures is furnished with an apparatus with which it can make progress through the water in any direction, and as mechanically adapted to its purpose as the paddles of a steam boat, or the oar of the waterman; we shall see too that each one of the green spots on the surface of the volvox globata has its proboscis like the trunk of an elephant, its stomach for the reception of food, and its watchful eye to direct its course, while foraging for sustenance.



THE PROTEUS.

Another remarkable animalcule is the proteus, so called from the power it possesses of continually changing its form. It is not easy to describe this creature, owing to the constant change of form it undergoes: now it is an elongated tube, now a conical one, now a flattened disc, and now a little tumbling ball; but whatever shape it assumes, it is observed to be throwing out numerous little arms and legs in every direction, doubtless hauling in provision for its manifold mouths, and the hundred or two of stomachs for which it has to provide.

We must say a word on the monad, the minutest form of animal life with which we are acquainted. In a single drop of the water taken from a stagnant pool, myriads of these little creatures may be seen in active motion. They are not more than the 32,000th part of an inch in diameter, and some notion of their number may be formed from the fact that they do not swim farther asunder than the width of their own bodies. If we examine a single one of them, we perceive that it is furnished with a prehensile proboscis, sundry stomachs constantly receiving nutriment, and an eye with which it can see.

The above are among the greatest curiosities of the microscopic world. Of this world, however, they form themselves but a very minute and almost microscopic section. Of the mass of living creatures known under the general appellation of infusoria, the different races are so numerous that it needs but the trouble of varying the locality and the conditions of the investigations to discover new ones at every fresh experiment. Whether the search be made on the summits of the loftiest mountains or in the lowest depths of mines, the

inquiry is attended with the same result of success, and, to most observers, of novelty.

Looking to the numbers of these animated beings—numbers which defy the power of figures to denote, and of which the human mind cannot form the remotest idea—the question naturally arises, What is their prescribed function in the great system of the world? Happily we are not without an answer to this question. Thanks to the revelations of science, we are enabled to recognise the purposes which they have accomplished for ages, and are destined to accomplish for ages yet to come. It is these frail and ephemeral creatures that, by depositing their bodies in the bottoms of lakes and ponds, and along the deep sea margins, erect the ramparts of nations and continents, convert the barren rock to a fruitful field, and supply the human dwellers upon earth with a cultivable soil and the essentials of industry. Strange that the materials of the divine Architect who builds up the world should be the infinitesimal forms once sentient with life and enjoyment. Yet so it is. There is not a grain of chalk or an atom of flint, be it found on mountain-tops or far inland, but bears in its structure the evidence that it once teemed with life and activity. Vast beds of clay and quarries of solid marble confess the same curious secret to the investigating microscope. The mountain meal of Sweden, which the inhabitants mix with their flour; the hones of Turkey, upon which we sharpen our steel blades; the rotten-stone of Bohemia, with which we polish our plate; the alluvial soil of a thousand valleys furnishing food to man and beast—all tell the same tale; all are the remains of minute animalcules whose work is done. It has even been suggested by an eminent naturalist and philosopher, that it is possible that there is not a particle of land upon the surface of the earth, save such portions of her strata as have been thrown up by volcanic action, which was not formed under water by animalcular deposits.

THE PIERROTS: A STORY OF FRENCH LIFE.

IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

We are not to consider the household at La Grie as consisting of two distinct families. The brothers would have thought it a strange thing if anybody had suggested the propriety of their separation as a consequence of their marriage. The customs of their class sanctioned the course they adopted, in living and labouring together, and having but one common interest. The young wives, who were models of neatness and activity, set their shoulders to the wheel in right good earnest, and La Grie in a short time became the focus of rural industry, and the centre of that comfort and independence which invariably result from its well-directed energies. The first years of their wedded life were years of quiet happiness, dashed with far less alloy than they had made up their minds to expect, and marked with more domestic pleasures and a greater share of prosperity than they had dared to hope. Under the manage-

ment of the brothers, the little farm threw beyond all precedent in its past history. They cut down encumbering timber, drained the waste patches of bog and swamp, deepened one portion of the fen and reclaimed another, levelled the waste quarry, covered its surface with new soil, and converted it into a kitchen-garden, and, by these improvements, and others of a like kind, deprived the farm of its old unhealthy character, and banished the ague from the neighbourhood. These measures brought into cultivation nearly double the amount of land which was at first available, and if they increased the toils of the brothers, and drove them at times to seek for other aid, they told capitally on the amount of the crops at harvest-time, and enabled the family to commence laying up a provision for a rainy day. The women, as the manner is in Normandy, did their full share of the out-door work, and, in addition to that, managed a small dairy, and a prodigious brood of barn-door fowls, whose eggs went very far in lieu of butcher's meat, and in spring and early summer were sold in hundreds to the collectors, who came round to gather them for the English market.

It was about a year after the double wedding that Nannette presented Jacques with a son and heir. The joy of this occasion was testified in no equivocal manner on the day of the baptism, when the child received the name of his father, and when every individual of the parish, related however remotely to the Grignon family, was invited to assist, and accordingly did assist at the ceremony. In the following year, Cecile followed her sister's example by bearing a son to Paul, who had him named Henri, out of compliment to old dame Grignon, who wished to perpetuate the name of her deceased husband. Two years afterwards a second child, a daughter, was born to Jacques, and, by his especial desire, bore her mother's name. These three were all the children that it pleased Providence to bestow upon the Pierrots.

The history of this humble family, if we were to trace it from this time forth along the course of the ensuing twelve or fifteen years, would present us with nothing more remarkable than may be summed up in a very few words. The children grew healthy and strong, and, passing much of their lives in the open air under the eye of their parents, acquired, with simple habits of thought, robust frames of body, and that natural courage which is in keeping with both. When they grew old enough they were sent to the village school—a discipline to which the eldest boy, Jacques, did not take kindly, though he submitted to it with perfect willingness and good temper. He was slow to learn, and for several years remained conning the first elements of instruction, while Henri, and afterwards Nannette, shot rapidly past him, and astonished the village pedagogue by their docility and progress. The Pierrots, though uneducated themselves, were profoundly impressed with the value of education, and spared no means within their power to secure it to their children. They ransacked the hawker's store of books, and, by a judicious selection of

volumes, supplied food of an appropriate kind for the reading taste which, with regard to Henri and Nannette, the experience of school had engendered. Henri was not nine years old when he began to manifest an extraordinary aptitude in the use of the pencil, or rather (for of pencils but very few came in his way) of such substitutes for that indispensable implement as his ingenuity could devise. He drew little Nannette in her long cap and ponderous sabots on his slate at school, and he chalked up with charcoal on the wall of the cowhouse old grandmother Grignon, cloaked, caped, tiaraed and basketed for the Saturday's market. The schoolmaster averred that the little fellow had a decided genius for art, and considered it his duty to apprise his father of the obligation he was under to see that it was not thrown away. Paul scratched his head at this communication, and, as a matter of course, had speech with Jacques concerning it. The upshot of their conference was, that they bought the boy a big book of blank leaves and a dozen of pencils when the hawker came round, and set him to follow his own bent.

When the lads were old enough to be of use on the farm, they began to divide their time equally between the cultivation of their minds and of their father's land. School could be attended only in the evenings and in the idle days of winter. But Henri found time every day for the exercise of his pencil, and grew so skilful in the use of it, as to be regarded in the light of a phenomenon by the whole village. The pastor, who, like many of his brotherhood in the French provinces, dabbled a little in the practice of art, on seeing some of Henri's sketches, sent for him, and made him a present of a few colours. The possession of these opened a new world to the enthusiastic boy, and he made a use of them which was so astonishing to the simple people around him, that all the neighbourhood came to see and admire the productions of his genius. So long as they lasted, he painted everything that came in his way—the cattle, the sheep, the fowls, the reedy fen, the team at plough, and lastly, to the inexpressible delight of his mother, the farm of La Grie, with the dark wood behind it and every one of its inmates, down to the ragged poodle in his tub, visible and recognisable in some part of the picture.

Though Paul was secretly gratified by the talents of his boy, they were a source of anxiety to his mind. He could ill afford to dispense with his labour on the farm, much less to pay for the costly instruction which he knew the lad would need in order to have a fair start in his profession, if, as all seemed to have settled it, an artist he was to be. Paul, therefore, pondered over it a good deal, and all the more that he was unwilling to impart his difficulty to Jacques, who he knew would meet it, as he always did anything of the sort, by some self-sacrifice in his favour. Of late the harvests had not been so good as they usually were; they had not reaped an average crop for three years, and though they had no dread of want before them, they had already trenched deeply on the savings of former years; and this was not a time for

incurring a new and heavy expense. Paul could not solve the problem, and for a year or two it weighed on his mind, while things took their natural course. The younger Jacques shot up early into a man, and at sixteen stood in stature as high as his father, and was equal to any labour that man can endure. Henri, on the contrary, grew slim and delicate-looking, and nature as well as inclination seemed to have destined him to a studious life.

When Henri was just turned of fifteen, the good old grandmother Grignon sickened of a sudden, and died in a few hours. Her death plunged the inmates of La Grie in the profoundest grief, which was not the less poignant when they heard from the notary, at the reading of her will, the unexpected amount which the old dame's industry and frugal management had enabled her to lay by for the use of her children. Death had at last solved Paul's problem for him, and, when the days of mourning were ended, it was agreed in a family council that the general legacy should be devoted to Henri's advantage, and expended in procuring him the best instruction in the profession for which he had manifested such a bent.

In due time, therefore, Paul took his son to Paris, and, furnished with an introduction from the kind pastor to an artist of some note, succeeded in placing the lad in his instructor's family for an agreed term of three years. We need not follow the course of the young student. Enough to say that he speedily recommended himself to the good-will of his master, and by the diligent use of his opportunities did credit to the instructions he received. He competed for several prizes in drawing during the first year, and was so fortunate as to win two, which were forwarded to La Grie without delay. None were so proud of these proofs of his talent as his little cousin Nannette, who exhibited them to all comers, though Henri's mother, it would have been remarked by a careful observer, happened seldom to be out of the way when the triumphs of her absent son had to be shown to the visitors. But Henri was not content with winning medals. When he had mastered the mechanical details of his profession, he began seriously to turn them to account, and in the course of the second year produced some small landscapes and scenes of rural life, which M. Ferrier, his master, advised him to forward to the annual exhibition, and which at once gained the suffrages of the Paris critics, and met with honourable notice in the public journals of the day. You may be sure that these journals, by some means or other, found their way to La Grie, and you may be equally sure that the people there perused them with a pleasure that more than repaid the sacrifices they had made.

Three years is a long period in the estimation of the young, and Henri, who began to be homesick before it was expired, thought that it would never have an end. How he longed to see the old home and the old faces, and hear the old voices of affection once again, only those can tell who have dear homes awaiting them, and are debarred by circumstances from the delights of reunion. But the time came round at last,

and, bidding M. Ferrier and his family farewell, Henri mounted the lumbering diligence soon after dawn, and turned a joyful face homewards.

When, on the second day's journey, the diligence came within sight of the cross-road that led to La Grie, Henri saw his father's market-cart drawn up at the corner of the road, and could distinguish at half a mile's distance the waving of hat and handkerchief in welcome of his return. He jumped down as the diligence stopped, and was the next moment in his mother's arms. When he turned to embrace Nannette, he half hesitated to advance. She, whom he had left a merry hoyden in sabots and pinapore, had grown into a graceful young woman, that he hardly dared to approach; and had not she, all unconscious of his reserve or the cause of it, more than met his advance, it is likely he would have contented himself with a polite bow newly imported from Paris, and have stammered some complimentary phrase from the same mint. But Nannette, as artless as ever, and quite unaware of the impression she had made, failed to notice his embarrassment, or, if she did notice it, attributed it to a very natural cause, which yet had nothing to do with it—namely, the sight of old scenes and the rush of old memories on returning to the beloved home from which he had been so long separated.

How La Grie cheered up at the return of the wanderer—how Henri became the lion of the village—how father and mother spent the long evenings in listening to the tales of Paris life that Henri told, and the great people with whom he had lived and talked—how Nannette came and sat with her hands crossed upon her knee, and, with her calm blue eyes looking on him, listened too, till the distant village was buried in sleep, and the very watchdogs had ceased to bark—all these things we must leave the reader to imagine for himself, since we have not time to dwell upon them. Neither can we dwell on the solitary walks of the young artist, with his unquiet heart, and his communings with nature and with his own troubled spirit, among the well-remembered spots where the sense of beauty and the love of beauty, and its oneness with truth and goodness, had first awoke to his childish perceptions—nor how it was at length that these far-away rambles were no longer solitary, though at times they were almost equally silent—but how Nannette came to share them. Let it suffice to say that the young cousins, by a custom very common in France, became betrothed lovers, an event which pleased well their respective parents. "The angel of life and the angel of death," says an eastern fable, "walk hand in hand—and truest love goes down to death whene'er true love is born."

The brothers Pierrot, we have said, were undemonstrative men; they spoke by actions and not by visible emotions and words. Though both rejoiced greatly at the betrothal of their children, neither spoke much beyond the solemn utterance of a blessing upon the union that was to be. On the following day, however, instead of separating to their several labours, as usual, they went together down to the fen, entered

the little flat-bottomed boat, and thrust out with their nets into the middle of the water, with the ostensible purpose of fishing, but more with the design, it is conjectured, of sharing each other's society, as they often did through the whole day when either good or ill fortune affected them deeply. They never returned. When evening came on and it grew dark, the younger Jacques, taking the cowherd with him to carry home the supposed catch of fish, went in search of them. All was silent in the fen, save where a croaking raven swept the black surface with his wing ere he disappeared to his eyrie. Jacques looked long and called aloud, but no voice replied, only the low gurgling among the flags and the bursting of a few bubbles in the centre of the pool. At length his eye caught sight of the boat; it lay bottom upwards among the flags, and was dragged half under by the might of something in the net curled round the stern.

When assistance came, and other boats were launched in the fen, and terrified voices rang, and torches waved in the darkness, the brothers Pierrot were drawn, fast locked and dead in each other's arms, from beneath the half-sunk boat. That night was a night of bitter lamentation and wailing at La Grie.

KESWICK AND SOUTHEY.

It was on the evening of the 6th September, 1855, that, leaving our inn at Keswick (the Royal Oak), we strolled out to search for lodgings, and to enjoy the beauties of the hour and the spot. Passing along the main street, we soon gained the bridge that spans the Greta, and there we stood to gaze on the far-famed Skiddaw, rising before us, "smooth, green and high," in massy grandeur. It was steeped in the gorgeous hues of the setting sun, and a rich beauteous red—the heath in blossom—painted its sides, and added to the charm of the colouring. Never after did we see it look so beautiful as at that moment; and in remembrance it seems somewhat like a wondrous charming fairy picture of the imagination. It was but a few moments we had leisure to gaze, for we were fain to press on in search of an abode; and presently we came near a house whose name recalled the memory of Southey: for there, during forty years of his life's pilgrimage, did he live—the husband, father, friend, and poet. This very brook, trickling along by our side, was the Greta, into which he flung stones till his arm ached, in the exuberance of his spirits, and which, when swollen by the winter rains, he "bridged over" at the bottom of his orchard, by piling up heaps of stones, so as to step from one to another—"a great work" which cost him, he said, "many a hard day's sport, half-knee-deep in the water." Vainly did we endeavour to catch a sight of "Greta Hall." All we could see was a blank wall, and a thick inclosure of surrounding trees. Nor did we afterwards obtain access within the domain. Returning from this, our first walk in the far-famed elysium of these romantic regions, we felt the force of the poet's words:

"Ah! that such beauty, varying in the light
Of living nature, cannot be portrayed

By words, nor by the pencil's silent skill,
But is the property of him alone
Who hath beheld it, noted it with care,
And in his mind recorded it with love."

The lakes and mountains of this district have been described by numerous tourists, with vivacity and a good deal of truthfulness and nature ; and yet no one can realise the beauty, the variety, and the exquisite charm of these delicious scenes who has not, for himself, beheld them. Until you have observed the strange, fantastic, and unexpected effects of light and shadow in these regions, it is impossible to conceive of such beauties as are continually meeting you at every turn, and awakening a fresh surprise at each change of time and atmosphere. Here is the difficulty of word-painting. You cannot give colouring ; you cannot depict air, sky, and clouds ; and there are visions of beauty that "may be remembered, but never, never painted by mortal pen," as the *Ettrick Shepherd* says ; "for after a', what is any description by us, puir c'returs, o' the works o' the great God ?"

True ; and yet, in some bright moments, the poet's pencil has been able to do this, in a measure. They who have seen the effect described by Southey, in the following passage, will be charmed with its truthfulness and beauty :—

"The mountains on Thursday evening, before the sun was quite down, or the moon bright, were all of one dead-blue colour ; their rifts, rocks, and swells, and scars, had all disappeared, the surface was perfectly uniform, nothing but the outline distinct ; and this even surface of dead-blue, from its unnatural uniformity, made them, though not transparent, appear transvius, as though they were of some soft or cloudy texture, through which you could have passed. I never saw any appearance so perfectly unreal. Sometimes a blazing sunset seems to steep them through and through with red light ; or, it is a cloudy morning, and the sunshine slants down through a rift in the clouds, and the pillar of light makes the spot, wherever it falls, so emerald green, that it looks like a field of paradise. At night you lose the mountains, and the wind so stirs up the lake, that it looks like the sea by moonlight."

Greta Hall commands a fine view of the scenery of the valley. It is thus described by Coleridge, when he was residing there in 1801. "This house stands on a low hill, the whole front of which is one field and an enormous garden. Behind the house is an orchard and a small wood on a steep slope, at the foot of which flows the river Greta, which flows behind our house, roaring like an untamed son of the hills, then winds round, and glides away in the front : so we live in a peninsula. In front we have a giant's camp ; an encamped army of tent-like mountains, which, by an inverted arch, gives a view of another vale. On our right the lovely vale, and the wedge-shaped lake of Bassenthwaite ; and on our left, Derwentwater and Lodore, full in view, and the fantastic mountains of Borrowdale. Behind us the massy Skiddaw, smooth, green, high, with two chasms, and a tent-like ridge in the larger. A fairer scene you have not seen in all your wanderings." In this home Southey eventually settled down, at first unwillingly, for his mind was full of Spain and the exquisite beauties of Cintra ; and his "dreams"

inclined him "to Lisbon as a resting-place ;" for he was, he said, "really attached to that country, and, odd as it might seem, to the people." He had found hospitality there, and even kindness, when he was a stranger and in want ; and then, too, he missed "southern luxuries, the fruits, the wines ;" and, above all, "the glorious sun in heaven." So the consulship at Lisbon was the day-dream of his wishes, for "when one is dreaming, Grosvenor, you know . . . !"

With these prepossessions it was no wonder that his first impressions of the lake scenery were not equal to what they might otherwise have been. He dreaded the climate, and the "vile, dark, rainy clouds," which paralysed his energies, and was for ever taking cold or getting sore eyes ; whereon he recommended "growling at clouds and Cumberland weather ;" but by-and-by he got acclimated, and then, with a burst of delight, he said, "As I become more familiar with these mountains, the more is their sublimity felt and understood. How wonderful they are ! How awful in their beauty ! All the poet part of me will be fed and fostered here." And he yielded himself up to the potent spell of "the ghosts of old Skiddaw and Great Robinson, the whole eye-wantouness of lakes and mountains, and the host of loveliest scenes that lay close at hand." And, having once nestled down into his mountain home, he loved it, and clave to it, and never left it but with regret, to return to it with joy and gladness. For beauty of prospect, as we have seen, this abode was unrivalled in attractions. The interior arrangements were peculiar. The room in which Southey wrote was the largest in the house, and commanded six distinct landscapes : "the two lakes, the vale, the river and mountains, the mists and clouds and sunshine making endless combinations, as if heaven and earth were for ever talking with each other."

This retreat was filled with the choicest of his books, arranged with much taste, according to his fashion, with due regard to size, colour, and condition. The rest of the house consisted of a great many small rooms, connected by long passages, all of which, with great ingenuity, were made available for holding books, every wall being lined from top to bottom with them. These carefully accumulated and much prized treasures were the pride of his eyes and the joy of his heart. Great pains had been taken to render some of the old books, in their vellum and parchment bindings, ornamental furniture for his shelves ; and those volumes of lesser value, which had become ragged and dirty, he caused to be covered, or rather bound, in coloured cotton prints, for the sake of making them clean and respectable in their appearance. This work devolved upon the ladies of his family ; his daughters, aided by any female friends who might be staying with them, were tasked to show their skill in the business ; and not fewer than 1200 to 1400 volumes were so bound by them at different times, filling completely one room, which he playfully designated the Cottonian Library. Much amusement was caused by the plan adopted of suiting the pattern to the contents of the book—a quaker work or volume of sermons being clad in sober drab, while poetry figured in some flowery design ; and not unfrequently a sly piece of satire was conveyed in the choice of a covering for the

production of some well known author. His library, at the time of his death, is said to have consisted of about 14,000 volumes—a large number of books to have been collected by one of such limited means: and what a never-failing source of delight had they been to him! "I want my books, and nothing else," he writes, in the depth of one wintry season. "Of the only three visitable families within reach, one is fled for the winter, and the others are flying; and I was going to say I am alone, but that the sight of the Bible, and Shakspere, and Milton, and Spenser, on my table, and Castanheda, and Barros, and Osorio, at my elbow, tell me I am in the best of all possible company. Everything, at present, looks, from my window, like the confectioners' shops at this season in London; and Skiddaw is the hugest of twelfth cakes. But when I go down to the lake-side, it would puzzle all my comparison-compounding fancy to tell you what it looks like there; the million and trillion forms of beauty soon baffle all description."

The beauties of the winter colouring in mountainous countries have excited the surprise and admiration of the passing stranger, and formed the theme of the resident lovers of nature. It is said that a greater variety exists in the winter colouring of the mountains than in their summer hues, so as to leave little cause of regret when the splendour of autumn is passed away. The oak coppices on the mountain sides retain bright red and russet leaves; the birch stands out conspicuous with its silver stem and puce-coloured twigs, and the hollies, with green leaves and scarlet berries, are now left visible, being no longer concealed by the summer foliage of the deciduous trees. The ivy, too, clothes the stems and boughs of the trees, and climbs up the steep rocks. The deep summer green of the herbage is succeeded by the rich orange olives of the ferns, the mosses, and the lichens, whose forms and colours are a source of inexhaustible admiration. Add to this the beautiful effect of the hoar-frost and drifted snow, with all the varieties they create, and the painter will find the materials for his art, or rather, will admire, while despairing to imitate.

After this digression we return to the poet, who draws in another letter a droll picture of his personal appearance when hibernating. "This Kamschatka weather," he writes, "has affected my eyes; they are better, however, which I attribute to an old velvet bonnet of Edith's, converted, without alteration, into a most venerable studying-cap for my worship. It keeps my ears warm, and I am disposed to believe that, having the sides of my head cold, affected the eyes. You may imagine what a venerable, and, as the French say, *pénétrating* air this gives me. Hair, forehead, eyebrows, and eyes, are hidden; nothing appears but nose, and that is so cold that I expect every morning when I get out of bed to see the snow lie on the summit of it."

With the swallows came the tourists, and flocks of friends and visitors; and then Southey would relax the labours of his study, and plan some joyful excursion among the neighbouring mountains. Of these parties he was the life and soul, usually heading the "infantry," and thinking little of a walk of twenty-five miles, even when he was past sixty.

There were various chosen places which he used to revisit annually; and occasionally grand meetings took place with Mr. Wordsworth and his family and friends at a point about half way between Keswick and Rydal. At these times as many as fifty persons used sometimes to meet.

Another delight was to cruise on the lake in his boat. Writing to his nephew lieutenant Southey, he says: "The lake is about four miles in length, and between one and two in breadth; this beautiful basin is clear as crystal, and shut in by mountains on every side excepting one, opening to the N. W. We are very frequently upon it, Harry and I being both tolerably good boatmen; and sometimes we sit in state, and the women row us—a way of manning a boat which will amuse you."

Sometimes, at the call of business, or for the sake of relaxation, an absence from home became necessary. But there was always a pang at leaving, and he half playfully, half tenderly, dwells on the dear delights he must forego:—"Oh dear, oh dear, there is such a comfort in one's old coat and old shoes, one's own chair and own fireside, one's own writing-desk and own library—with a little girl climbing up my neck, and saying, 'Don't go to London, papa—you must stay with Edith'; and a little boy, whom I have taught to speak the language of cats, dogs, cuckoos, and jackasses, etc. before he can articulate a word of his own;—there is such a comfort in all these things, that *transpor-tation* to London for four or five weeks seems a heavier punishment than any faults of mine deserve."

The return home, however, made ample amends. Once, coming from a visit to the continent, he reached the neighbourhood of Keswick too late to find the children up. Three hours would have carried him home; but he preferred to pass the night at Mr. Wordsworth's, that he might be welcomed by the whole household: for he said, "A return home under fortunate circumstances has something of the character of a triumph, and requires daylight." In his "Pilgrimage to Waterloo," he has given a vivid picture of his domestic happiness in the account of the return home:—

" Soon all and each came crowding round to share
The cordial greeting, the beloved sight;
What welcoming of hand and lip were there!
And when these overflows of delight
Subsided to a sense of quiet bliss,
Life hath no purer, deeper happiness."

Nor did the scenery of his home lose any of its attractions by foreign travel. In reply to the inquiries of a friend on this subject, he writes: "Does this country, you ask, appear flat and unprofitable, after Alpine scenery? Certainly not. It has lost very little by the comparison, and that little will soon be regained. Skiddaw is by much the most imposing mountain, for its height, that I have yet seen. Many mountains which are actually as high again from their base, do not appear to more advantage. I find here the charm of proportion, and would not exchange Derwentwater for the lake of Geneva, though I would gladly enrich it with the fruit trees and luxuriant beauties of a Swiss summer. Their waterfalls, indeed, reduce ours to insignificance; but, on the other hand, all their streams and rivers are hideously discoloured,

so that that which should be one of the greatest charms of the landscape, is, in reality, a disgusting part of it."

Twice during his life he visited Norfolk, the scenery of which, forming so entire a contrast with his usual outlook, seems to have interested him much. He says: "This part of England looks as if nature had wearied herself with adorning the rest with hill and dale, and squatted down here to rest herself. The unbroken horizon impresses me, appearing so much wider than at sea, and the skylines which it affords. I had the same impression in passing through Picardy, and if I lived in such a country should, perhaps, find as many beauties in the sky as I do here upon the earth. Anywhere I could find food for the heart and the imagination, at those times when we are open to outward influences, except in great cities. I could be very happy in such a home as this." In an epistle written in blank verse, to Mrs. Southey, during one of these Norfolk visits, he thus expresses his feelings:—

" Everywhere
Nature is lovely: on the mountain height,
Or where the embosomed mountain glen displays
Secure sublimity, or where around
The undulating surface gently slopes
With mingled hill and valley; everywhere
Nature is lovely; even in scenes like these,
Where not a hillock breaks the unvaried plain,
The eye may find new charms that seeks delight.
At eve I walk abroad; the setting sun
Hath softened with a calm and mellow hue
The cool fresh air; below, a bright expanse,
The waters of the *Broad* lie luminous.
I gaze around; the unbounded plain presents
Ocean immensity, whose circling line
The bending heaven shuts in. So, even here
Methinks I could be well content to fix
My sojourn; grow familiar with these scenes,
Till time and memory make them dear to me,
And wish no other home."

These lines were written before the poet had found a fixed habitation. In his ultimate choice of an abode, he was certainly most happy. For many years after he settled at Keswick he tasted the full delight of domestic happiness; and in this his loving heart found its all-sufficient joy. The death of his only son was the first blow struck at the root of his earthly bliss, and great indeed and irrecoverable was that loss. Yet it was with the chastened feeling of subdued and filial spirit that he said, shortly after that event: "No man can possibly have been happier; and at this moment, when I am suffering from almost the severest loss that could have befallen me, I am richer, both in heart and hope, than if God had never given me the child whom it hath pleased him to take away. My heart has been exercised with better feelings during his life, and is drawn nearer towards heaven by his removal. . . . Little did I think how soon and how literally my own words were to be fulfilled:—

"To earth I should have sunk in my despair,
Had I not clasped the cross, and been supported there."

In the education of his children, and in his whole domestic character, there is much both pleasing and instructive, and well calculated to attract admiration and secure respect and affection. It is not, however, our object to give a sketch of Southey's life and history, nor to speak

of his writings and opinions, except as they have relation to the beauties of nature by which he was surrounded, and in the daily contemplation and enjoyment of which his spirit took delight. In a letter addressed to his young daughter Edith, there is a passage which shows how skilfully he could turn to use the natural love of his children for the objects of sublimity and beauty which had charmed their infant minds. He had presented her with a bible as a new year's gift, and he recommends her to make a daily practice of reading a portion of the sacred word night and morning. "This way," he says, "is, I verily believe, the surest way of profiting by the scriptures. In the course of this easy and regular perusal, the system of religion appears more and more coherent, its truths are felt more intimately, and its precepts and doctrines reach the heart, as slow showers penetrate the ground. In passages which have been repeatedly heard and read, some new force, some peculiar meaning, some home application which had before been overlooked, will frequently come out, and you will find, in thus recurring daily to the bible, as you have done among the lakes and mountains which you love so well, in the word of God, as in his works, beauties and effects and influences as fresh as they are inexhaustible. I say this from experience."

As years advanced, there seemed to be a still fonder love for his home; and he said: "I am every year discovering new scenes of beauty. Here I shall probably pass the remainder of my days; our church stands at a distance from the town, unconnected with any other buildings, and so as to form a striking and beautiful feature in the vale. The churchyard is as open to the eye and to the breath of heaven as if it were a Druid's place of meeting. There I shall take up my last abode, and it is some satisfaction to think so—to feel as if I were at anchor, and should shift my berth no more."

Nor were these anticipations disappointed. In the home he had loved, he at length drooped and died. Painful was the cloud that obscured his last years; but the time of his release came, and in the month of March, 1843, worn out in mind and body, he quietly fell asleep.

It was a dark stormy morning when he was borne to his last resting-place at the western end of the beautiful churchyard of Crosthwaite. There lay his beloved children, Herbert, Emma, and Isabel—and there Edith, his faithful helpmate of forty years; few besides his own family and immediate neighbours followed his remains. His only intimate friend within reach, Mr. Wordsworth, crossed the hills that wild morning to be present.

To that last resting-place we found our way before we left Keswick, and as we raised our eyes from the stone on which his name and that of his Edith are inscribed, and lifted them to the "everlasting hills" that rise behind the abode of the dead, we thought of the words inscribed by his friend upon his monument:—

"Ye vales and hills, whose beauty hither drew
The poet's steps, and fixed him here; on you
His eyes have closed. . . .
His joys, his griefs, have vanish'd like a cloud
From Skiddaw's top; but he to heaven was vowed
Through a life long and pure, and steadfast faith
Calm'd in his soul the fear of change and death."

Poetry.

OLD AGE.

SOLEMN and sad, our being's light dechneth
In its late evening hours,
And mournfully its wintry sunset shineth
Over life's fading flowers.

Weary and worn, the aged form reposes
Before the close of day;
Weary and unrefresh'd, the eye uncloseth
With morning's earliest ray.

And hope, no more her cheering radiance blendeth
With long'd-for days to come;
"Desire shall fail," because the old man tendeth
Fast to his narrow home.

E'en now, its shadows o'er his spirit linger,
And dim his failing sight;
While Time's uplifted hand, with warning finger,
Points to the coming Night!

In the gay scenes of mirth he hath "no pleasure."
As in the days gone by:
And better thus, if but his heart and treasure
Be surely fix'd on high.

Then, as with beauty clad, the ruin hoary
Smiles in the sunset's glow;
So from the Father's throne, a solemn glory
Illumes the aged brow.

Youth's restless passions, manhood's pride unbending,
All vanquish'd now, or dead;
Life's storms forgotten, in the calm descending
Upon the sauntly head.

He sees but, in the grave's unfolding portal,
The door of his release;
There the tired wanderer finds a rest immortal,
The war-worn soldier, peace.

He hails each passing trial, as the token
Of his dear Father's love;
An earthly treasure left, a fond tie broken,
But to be join'd above.

The loving looks, that light earth's fondest greeting,
Now mock his darkening eye;
They shall not smile *unseen*, to bless our meeting
In our bright home on high.

Earth's sweetest music on his dull ear falleft
With an unheeded tone;
Yet heareth he the "still small voice," that calleth,
"Come! for thy task is done."

For us, who yet stand on the scene of trial,
The battle-field of life,
Of its high duties be there no denial,
No flinching from the strife!

Dark doubts, strong passions, evil thoughts, will haunt us;
We may not yield, nor flee;
And, "in an hour we know not," may confront us
Life's last, dread enemy.

Oh! be our conflict earnest, and enduring
Our fearless trust on high;
The strength we pray for *shall* be ours, insuring
Our final victory.

M. LOED.

THE BRIDGE OF TRUTH.

It chanced a farmer, with his son,
From market walk'd, their labour done.
The son, in travels far abroad,
With scenes remote his mind had stored;
Yet home returning not more wise,
Though richer in amusing lies.
A mastiff dog now pass'd them by,
And caught the son's admiring eye.
"This dog," he said, "puts me in mind
Of one far nobler of its kind,
Which in my travels once I saw,
Larger than any known before.
It was, I think, as large, indeed,
As neighbour Stedman's famous steed;
I'm sure you never had a horse
To rival it in size or force."

"Your tale is marvellous, my son,
But think not yours the *only* one;
For I a prodigy can tell,
To match your wondrous story well—
A bridge we come to, by-and-by,
That lets down all who tell a lie;
Down to the gulf below they fall,
And vainly for deliverance call.
'Tis said, none ever yet could find
The artist who this work design'd;
But, sure it is, this very day,
We both shall cross it in our way."

The startled youth turn'd deadly pale,
Astonish'd at the fearful tale.
"Nay, father, I have said too much,
'Tis clear the case could not be such;
For I remember being told,
The dog was only nine months old;
And yet it was a creature rare,
To which no others could compare;
I'm confident that it was quite
Your very tallest heifer's height."

As nearer to the bridge they prest,
Again his sire the youth address'd:
"Large as our heifer, did I say,
The dog I met the other day?
Nay, for that matter, you're too wise;
To think a dog could be this size;
But I could on my honour state,
That it was pretty near as great,
And, if I may believe my eyes,
Just like a full-grown calf in size."

The fatal bridge now close at hand,
The strippling makes a final stand—
"Father, at what a rate you walk!
Is this the bridge of which you talk?
Hear me, the truth I will declare:
This foreign dog was not so rare,
But much like others in its size,
With little to create surprise."

The bridge thus brought him to the test,
And all his falsehoods were confest!

There is a bridge which must be pass'd
By one and all of us at last;
To those whose refuge is in lies,
"Twill be, alas! a "bridge of sighs."
Beneath it is a gulf of woe,
Where those who "love a lie" must go;
But over, on the other side,
A beauteous prospect, fair and wide.
Once landed on this fearful bridge,
One step advanced upon its ridge,
Eternal truth, without disguise,
Will burst upon our startled eyes.
May He who is the Way, the *Truth*,
Direct aright the steps of youth,
To do what's pleasing in his eyes,
And "false ways" utterly despise.

ELLEN ROBERTS.